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THANKS-GIVING

Sermon,

FOR

THE RECOVERY

OF HIS PRESENT MAJESTY

KING GEORGE III.

&c. &c. &c. &c.

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PREACHED AT FORRES,

ON THURSDAY, THE 23<sup>d</sup> DAY OF APRIL, 1789.

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BY R. KING, A. M.



PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

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1797.

[Entered at Stationers' Hall.]

THANKS GIVING

1800

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THE REPORT

KING GEORGE III.

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THE DEDICATION.

TO
HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE DUTCHESS OF YORK,
&c. &c. &c.

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MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HIGHNESS,

FOR want of a more amiable  
Character in public or private Life, I humbly  
take the Liberty of honouring the following  
THANKS-GIVING SERMON, with your Illustrious  
Name. Meantime, That you may long be con-  
tinued to enjoy all the Blessings of this Life, and  
finally receive that Crown which is never to fade,  
is the earnest prayer and wish of,

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HIGHNESS,

Your Highness'

Most obedient,

Faithful,

Devoted,

Humble Servant,

RALPH KING.

Academy, Charles-st.

Westminster,

6th APRIL, 1797.



THE PRESENTATION

THE ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE DUTCHY OF YORK

MAY 17 1844

For sale at a public sale

at the residence of

the late Sir John

the late Sir John

the late Sir John

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## THANKS-GIVING SERMON.

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DANIEL, CHAP. II. VERSES 20th, 21st, 22d.

*" Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name  
" of God, for ever and ever ; for wisdom and  
" might are his—He changeth the times and the  
" seasons ; he removeth Kings, and he setteth up  
" Kings—He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and  
" knowledge to them that know understanding—  
" He revealeth the deep and secret things : He  
" knoweth what is in the darknes, and the  
" light dwelleth with him."*

THE ways of Heaven are dark and mysterious.

Our shallow understanding traces them in  
vain. We see in part, and know only in part.  
And very frequently, the very little which we  
do know, is very imperfect and insignificant.

The

The footsteps of God are not to be traced by men. His ways are not like ours ; nor are our thoughts like his—for, as Heaven is high above the earth, so far is he removed beyond our comprehension.

A very wise and good man, on this subject, being once asked, what God was?—answered, That he wished a day's time to consider of it. When the day was expired, he asked two days ; and afterwards two days more.—In short, instead of giving in his answer, he still required double the time to consider of it : and when pressed to give a final reply, he said, The more he contemplated the nature of God, the more he waded out of his depth. He was astonished that any mortal, finite creature, should attempt to define the nature and perfections of a Being, who is immortal, infinite, and incomprehensible.

Even in the moral government of God, in this world, we see but darkly, and as it were, through a glass. The mere contingencies, and dark irregularities which often seem to appear in the conduct of human affairs, are very apt, at first sight, to lead men to imagine, that even in the divine administration itself, some inconsistencies happen : But all these vanish and disappear in a moment, when, on the other hand we reflect, that our narrow understanding cannot sufficiently

sufficiently comprehend the mysterious scale of God's Providence. Such is the divine power—such is the divine wisdom—and such is the divine goodness, that, without the help of our knowledge, or the consent of our approbation, He doth according to his will, in the armies of Heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of this lower world! None can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou? His arm is full of might, and we may be assured, that his goodness extendeth over all his works. We are told, that not so much as a hair of our head can fall to the ground without his notice: and as a proof of this, Things which, in the expectations of men, appear most likely to succeed, in the eyes of God, never had any existence at all,

The irregularities, which seem to appear in the divine administration, and which men very improperly call prosperity and adversity, or, the lot of good and ill, are both the appointments of Heaven—and wherefore should men complain? We have a noble example of resignation, in the conduct of the good old Eli. When he was informed of the lamentable approaching end of his two young sons, who both fell in the same battle, and on the same day; he expressed the resignation and composure of his mind, in these inimitable heroic words—  
 “It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him  
 “good.”



“good.” Job likewise, when severely tried ; when reduced from a state of the most exalted prosperity, to a condition of the utmost adversity, made no farther complaint than this—  
 “What,” says he, “shall I receive good things  
 “from the hand of God, and shall I not receive  
 “evil? The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh  
 “away, and blessed be the name of the Lord  
 “for ever.”

Besides, in the present case, we have the most illustrious evidence of Daniel’s trust in, and approbation of, the divine wisdom and goodness, when two most lamentable events were revealed unto him ; the subversion of a kingdom, and the calamities which were about to come upon two of its Kings, the father and the son—“Then  
 “said Daniel, blessed be the name of God for  
 “ever and ever : for wisdom and might are his :  
 “He changeth the times and the seasons : He  
 “removeth Kings and setteth up Kings : He  
 “giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge  
 “to them that know understanding—He re-  
 “vealeth the deep and secret things : He know-  
 “eth what is in the darkness, and the light dwel-  
 “leth with him.”

Now, before I enter upon the doctrines which I mean to draw from these words, it may perhaps be proper to mention the occasion upon which they were spoken.

Nebuch-

Nebuchadnezzar, at this time, filled the throne of Babylon. He was one of the proudest and most insolent men, that perhaps ever lived on the face of the earth: But his insolence was checked!—While he was glorying himself in the pride of his kingdom, and boasting in the majesty of his dominion—Lo! at the command of that Being, by whose power Kings reign and Princes decree judgment, there fell a voice from Heaven, saying,—“ O King, Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee, and they shall drive thee from men: and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen—and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know, that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And the same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar, and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen: And his body was wet with the dew of Heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles feathers, and his nails like birds claws: And when all this was fulfilled upon him from the Lord—then says Nebuchadnezzar—I, Nebuchadnezzar, lift up mine eyes unto Heaven, and my reason and understanding returned unto me, and I blessed

- “ fed the Most High ; and I praised and ho-  
 “ noured him that liveth forever, and for ever ;  
 “ whose dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
 “ and whose kingdom is from generation to ge-  
 “ neration.”

Further, the calamities which befel his son Belshazzar, are very affecting. This young Prince made a great and impious feast, to no less than a thousand of the neighbouring Princes, besides his concubines and servants : But while he was eating, and drinking wine with them, and forgot to humble himself before God, for the calamities which had just befallen his father—Lo ! that Being, who sits in Heaven, and who can make the guilty even a terror unto themselves, commanded one of the ministers of his wrath, to disturb the mind of the young Prince even in the midst of his banquet—“ And the  
 “ same hour, we are told, came forth fingers of  
 “ a man’s hand, and wrote over against the  
 “ candlestick, upon the plaister of the wall of  
 “ the King’s palace : And the King saw the part  
 “ of the hand that wrote : And the King’s  
 “ countenance was changed, and his thoughts  
 “ troubled him : so that the joints of his loyns  
 “ were loosed, and his knees smote one against  
 “ another. Now, the interpretation of the hand-  
 “ writing was this—God hath numbered thy  
 kingdom God



“ kingdom, and finished it—thou art weighed  
 “ in the balances, and art found wanting--and  
 “ thy kingdom is divided, and given unto the  
 “ Medes and Persians—And in that same night  
 “ was Belshazzar, the King, slain—and Darius,  
 “ the Median, took the kingdom from him. And  
 “ all this was accomplished, that men might  
 “ know, that the Most High God ruleth in  
 “ Heaven, and giveth the kingdom to whom-  
 “ soever he will.” Well, therefore, does Daniel  
 exclaim in the words of the text—“ Blessed be  
 “ the name of God, for ever and ever : for wis-  
 “ dom and might are his, &c.”

Now, what I mean to attempt at this time, is,  
 to endeavour to shew some of the reasons which  
 we of this nation and kingdom have, to bless  
 God, for the late kind interposition of his power,  
 his wisdom, and his goodness, so timeously dis-  
 played, in the late happy Recovery of our most  
 Gracious Sovereign Lord the King. Says Da-  
 niel, “ Blessed be the name of God for ever  
 “ and ever.”

What the design of Providence is, or may have  
 been, in that severe affliction and happy recovery  
 of this illustrious personage and good man, may  
 perhaps as yet be concealed from the eyes of  
 men. Time may reveal this, and it may not.  
 God acts not by partial, but by general laws :  
 and

and we may be assured that such power, such wisdom, and such goodness were not engaged but for some wise and good end, though to us presently unseen. The Almighty does nothing in vain. Whatever he does is best and fit to answer the best and wisest ends. Nothing in the scale of his Providence is without a meaning. Every thing proceeds from universal skill, and tends to universal perfection. All the appointments of Heaven are sent for the noblest and best of purposes. Nebuchadnezzar was proud; but God brought him low, that he might not forget that an invisible hand ruled in the kingdoms of men. Our King, on the contrary, as far as we may presume to discern, was humble. This visitation therefore might only fall on him as the head of this nation and kingdom. Our Saviour bore the chastisement of his people; and the iniquities of us all were laid upon him. Belshazzar was impious and wicked, and therefore he fell. Our King, on the other hand, was pious, and virtuous, and good—and behold, like the good Hezekiah, he received an addition to the number of his days. The decree was not “Cut him down.” He was to grow like a cedar in Lebanon. He was to prosper like an olive-plant. His children’s children were to see him, and in him they were to be blessed. He was to con-

tinue

tinue a still farther comfort and happiness to his afflicted family and friends, and to be preserved as a pattern and promoter of religion, amidst a sinful nation and people. How much therefore ought the heart of every thinking man to praise the Lord, and join in with the prophetic language of Daniel, and say, "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever."

Now I am aware it will be asked, since I have made such a comparison between these two wicked kings and this good man, how comes it to correspond with the justice of God to punish an innocent person for such a sinful nation and people as ours? or, as Abraham argues, on a similar occasion, Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? That be far from thee, Lord, to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; that be far from thee. The answer to these queries is, That a full evidence in reply is in part yet wanting. We have indeed clear demonstrations of the wisdom and power, and goodness of God, in the beautiful and admirable frame of things around us: but we must stay till the day of judgment, for a clear and full manifestation of the Divine Justice in the general distribution of rewards and punishments in this life, or, what we improperly call the lot of good and ill. On this account, the day of judgment is, in Scripture, called the day

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of



of the revelation of the righteous judgments of God.

In the meantime, however, our reason, as well as revelation, is sufficient testimony to convince us of this first truth, That whatever happeneth is right. A Being possessed of infinite goodness and power, must likewise be equally strict in justice : therefore the justice of God is in every sense equal to his power. Says the Scripture, The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. There is no iniquity with him, nor accepting of persons. Our most gracious Sovereign was afflicted ; nor could the wealth of all the kingdoms and crowns in the world keep off the indisposition ; nor the skill of any physician in the universe foresee or remove it, without the interposition of the Divine Being : therefore, justly exclaims the prophet, “ Blessed  
“ be the name of God for ever and ever ; for  
“ wisdom and might are his : he knoweth what  
“ is in the the darkness, and light dwelleth with  
“ him.” Many of the dispensations of God are not easily to be seen into, by the nicest examination of men. Our state here is imperfect ; and we walk in this world, as it were, in the dark. The seeming disproportion of good and ill which attend on different characters among men, and which appear to us to be improperly applied, is not sufficiently seen into, for us to draw a decisive  
conclusion.

conclusion. Without a special revelation, the last day can alone satisfy the impartial conjectures of men, respecting divine administration.

There is a remarkable passage on this point to be found in an Eastern manuscript, of Jewish tradition, and with which I shall conclude this part of the subject. It is said, " That Moses, " who knew many of the secrets of God, by " revelation, had once a conference with the " Supreme Being, on the top of a mountain, " where, it is reported, he was permitted to " propose some questions to the Almighty, concerning his administration in this lower world. " In the midst of this divine conference, Moses " was commanded by God to look down upon " the plain below. At the foot of the mountain there issued out a clear spring of water, " at which a soldier alighted from his horse to " drink. He was no sooner gone, than a little " boy came to the same place, and finding some " money, which the soldier had dropped, he " took it up, and went his way. Immediately " after this, came an infirm old man, weary with " age and travelling, and having quenched his " thirst, sat down to rest himself by the side of " the spring. The soldier, missing the money, " returns to search for it, and demanded it of " the old man, who earnestly affirmed that he " had not seen it, and instantly appeals to Hea-

“ ven, in witness of his innocence. The soldier,  
 “ not believing his protestations, immediately  
 “ killed him. Moses, with horror and amaze-  
 “ ment, fell down on his face to the ground,  
 “ when the Divine Voice thus prevented his  
 “ expostulation : Be not surpris’d, Moses, nor  
 “ ask why the Judge of the whole earth hath  
 “ suffer’d this thing to come to pass. The  
 “ child indeed which thou sawest is the occasion  
 “ that the blood of the old man is spilt—but  
 “ know, likewise, that the old man whom thou  
 “ sawest is the very murderer of that very child’s  
 “ father.” “ O Lord, how unsearchable are thy  
 “ judgments, and thy ways past finding out.”

Having now attempted, in some measure, to  
 shew the justice of God, and to vindicate his  
 ways to men, I shall immediately proceed to the  
 doctrines propos’d.

The wisdom of God is conspicuous in every  
 thing that happens, and his goodness extends  
 over all his works. Every thing proceeds from  
 him, and is directed by his power. The united  
 skill of the whole universe combin’d in one, in  
 this critical moment of our affairs, without the  
 kind interposition of a divine and invisible Hand,  
 could not, even for one single moment, have  
 either alleviated the distress, removed the indis-  
 position, or quieted the uneasy mind of our most  
 gracious Sovereign. All the efforts of nature,  
 together



together with all the devices of men, cannot say, Peace! Peace! when God says, There is no Peace. But, on the contrary, he can say, Be calm—Be still; and all things obey. His arm is full of might, and his power none can resist. He sitteth on his throne in the centre, and his breath giveth life to all the world. Order, and grace, and beauty, all spring from his hand, though the human understanding comprehendeth them not. Says Moses, “Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness—fearful in praises—doing wonders.”

When Abraham interceded with the Lord for the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, we know that God condescended to save the place if there were only five righteous men to be found in that great city. Nor will it, at present, be unreasonable to suggest, that the tears of an afflicted Queen, together with the cries of an afflicted family and people, may have even had some weight in the presence of unerring Providence, to turn the balance in favour of this happy and much wished for Recovery. To strengthen this opinion, we have reason to think that human intreaties may prevent Divine judgments. The Heathens used their sacrifices, and killed their bullocks, for this very purpose. We know likewise from the history of Lazarus, whom  
our

our Saviour raised from the grave after he had been dead four days, that the prayers of the righteous avail much. The tears of the sister of this young man moved the compassionate Saviour of mankind to exert his power, and accomplish her desire, by working a miracle in her behalf. A narration of the passage will best illustrate the occasion.

“Upon the death of Lazarus, when Mary  
 “was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she  
 “fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord,  
 “if thou hadst been here, my brother had not  
 “died : when Jesus therefore saw her weeping,  
 “and the Jews also weeping, which came with her,  
 “he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and  
 “said unto them, Where have ye laid him ?  
 “They say unto him, Lord, come and see.  
 “Then Jesus, groaning again in himself, cometh  
 “unto the grave, after Lazarus had been dead  
 “four days. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon  
 “it. Then said Jesus, take ye away the stone,  
 “Then they took away the stone from the place  
 “where the dead was laid. And Jesus lift up  
 “his eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, I thank  
 “thee, that thou hast heard me. And I know  
 “that thou hearest me always. And when he  
 “had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice,  
 “Lazarus come forth. And he that was dead  
 “came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-  
 clothes.

“ clothes. And his face was bound about with  
 “ a napkin. Then Jesus said unto them, Loose  
 “ him and let him go.”

The reflection is clear. The same power which gave life to this dead man, hath given health to our King. The same goodness which was moved, by the lamentations of a weeping sister, and her afflicted friends, hath once more condescended to compassionate a Weeping Queen, an afflicted family, and sorrowful people. Let us therefore extol his power, admire his wisdom, and adore his goodness ; and, with Daniel, “ Let  
 “ us bless his name forever and ever: for he killeth  
 “ and he maketh alive—he raiseth up, and he  
 “ casteth down—he delivereth and rescueth, and  
 “ worketh signs and wonders, in Heaven and in  
 “ earth.”

The goodness of God in this happy Recovery was conspicuous in many respects. It was obvious in one in particular. At that time, men of ambitious and interested principles were eagerly contending for power, and likely to throw confusion into the administration of public affairs ; but all their devices were suddenly checked by the Divine interposition, which can do every thing with a nod. The danger was imminent ! The necessity urgent ! But God stopped the disease, and the expectations of men, by a single word. “ Hitherto shalt thou go, but  
 “ no



"no farther," was announced; and all was quiet.

It is to be observed, that the affairs of the nation, at that time, were in the hands of an able man, a man whose judgment, perseverance, and skill are not equalled by any in the kingdom. He was steady in persevering, and God prospered his work. He conducted it with prudence, and it was crowned with ample success. He contended for his King, and God restored him.\*

Again, Another great blessing which this Recovery bids fair to secure unto us, is, the preservation of our happy and glorious Constitution. The preservation of our religion, our laws, and our liberty, is an inestimable blessing. In this does the happiness of every Briton consist. In this we are highly favoured of the Lord. By the religious constitution of Britain, every subject is allowed to worship God in any manner he pleases, provided he gives no disturbance to his neighbours. By the legislative constitution of Britain, every subject has an equal power or right to defend his property with his life; and in this respect the beggar is equal to the King. And by the liberty of the British constitution,

\* Allusion is made of the Right Honourable William Pitt, the present Minister, and son of the ever memorable Earl of Chatham, both remarkably eminent in public administration.

every subject can go where he pleases, provided he hath done nothing to forfeit his liberty. These are blessings worth the contending for. These are blessings worth the praying for. It is therefore incumbent on us, as good subjects and good Christians, to unite our hearts together, in offering up our earnest prayers to that King who is immortal; and with thankful gratitude, to adore him, for the late kind interposition of his goodness, in the Recovery and Preservation of our most gracious Sovereign.

To conclude.—Many and important lessons may be drawn from this afflictive and severe visitation, both to Prince and people. There is a loud cry to the King and Royal Family to consider, be humble, and express their thanks, in gratitude. To the people, the voice of Heaven is, Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help; whose breath goeth out, and he returneth again unto his earth; but place your confidence in God, and he will sustain thee: for it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in men. From all which it appears, that neither wealth nor power—neither riches nor honours, can purchase life for a single moment. They are poor comforters indeed, when God says, Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.

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Nothing then but virtue and a good conscience will stand us in any stead. The tears of the nearest and dearest on earth have, then, no charms at all, to move the unrelenting heart of that grim foe. When he calls, we cannot stay. We must not resist his call. His shafts never miss their aim, and his arrows never return, without doing execution. Let us then, my christian friends, while we have health, mind our time ; because when sickness comes, little is to be done. When our candle is just about to sink, how can we see to work ? When our sun is just going down, how can we see the light ? We are desired to walk, while it is day ; because in the night no man can see to work ; and to let our light so shine before men, that others may see our good works, and thereby glorify our Father which is in Heaven.

This moment is only ours : in the next, we may be in the state of the dead. This is the day of salvation—This the accepted time. The present is truly valuable—To-morrow may never be seen. Let us therefore do every thing in honour of that Supreme Being, who has wisdom, and power, and goodness, to accomplish every design, by a single word. Let us, in every action of our lives, look up to that King who is immortal and invisible—who is the King of kings



kings and Lord of lords. And let us, at all times, act as under his inspection; whose eye pierceth the secrets of every heart, and remembereth them for ever.

We should not imagine, that, because punishment is delayed, the arm of the Almighty is weakened—nor flatter ourselves, with vain hopes, that he winketh at our sins—for we may be assured, that the day of the Lord is fast approaching, when the high and the low; the rich and the poor; the wise and the ignorant; the King and the beggar, must all, and each of them stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and receive their sentence from the mouth of a just, and thrice holy God.

In a word, my friends, as we have this day seen some of the effects of divine power and wisdom displayed, in the late happy Recovery; so let every one of us, of this parish and congregation, admire that memorable, and redeeming love of Christ, which we have such near prospect of commemorating; and while we adore his wisdom, and power, and goodness, so lately and always displayed, let us never forget, to humble ourselves before him, on account of our sins, which are many.

While we are now thanking him for late mercies bestowed on our King; let us the same

same time seek his grace, to make us worthy, to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, which is a prelude, to the grand supper of the Lord; when all men shall sing, “ Worthy, worthy, is  
“ the Lamb that was slain, to receive all glory,  
“ and honour, and blessing.”—and all the arches of heaven shall answer and say, “ Blessed be the  
“ name of God, for ever and ever.” Amen.

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